

First baby of 2019 gets boat to take home

Outdoorsy Yakutat couple brings home fitting boat rocker gift along with baby

By ALEX McCARTHY
JUNEAU EMPIRE

A couple hours after their first child was born, a Yakutat couple found out their daughter was also Juneau's first of 2019.

Saige Roisin Kunau was born at 4:33 a.m. Jan. 2 at Bartlett Regional Hospital, and parents Cody Kunau and Samantha Muñoz were relieved. They'd come from Yakutat to Juneau on Dec. 10, as Muñoz was due Dec. 28. That date came and went, and Saige stayed put.

Finally, in the early hours of Jan. 2, Muñoz went into labor and just a couple hours later Saige was born. Kunau and Muñoz met while working at the Yakutat Lodge in the small village about 200 miles northwest of Juneau, and they said Saige will be raised to love the outdoors.

"It's a little fishing village," Muñoz said. "You've got to really appreciate fish, the outdoor lifestyle and the subsistence lifestyle. It's perfect for us. He's a fishing guide and I went there because I love the outdoors. She's going to grow up knowing this."

Kunau chimed in from the other side of the hospital room.

"She's a fishing guide in training," he said.

Saige already has a leg up — being the first baby of the year for BRH (and Juneau as a whole), she got a few gifts. One of those gifts is a wooden boat that doubles as a baby rocker. Kunau and Muñoz were shocked when they heard Saige was the first baby of the year in Juneau, and were even more stunned when they saw the boat.

It's a few feet long and wide enough to fit a baby and a slew of stuffed animals. Dr. Lindy Jones, who delivered babies for years at the hospital, made it. Jones is currently a doctor in the Emergency Room, but with his past connection to the obstetrics (OB) wing of the hospital and his interest in woodworking, he has made gifts the past couple years for the first baby of the year.

This one was from mahogany that had been laying around for around 30 years, OB Director Michelle Van Kirk said. She and others in the depart-



ALEX McCARTHY | JUNEAU EMPIRE

Yakutat residents Cody Kunau and Samantha Munoz sit with their baby Saige Roisin Kuneau on Friday, Jan. 4 at Bartlett Regional Hospital. Saige was the first baby born at the hospital this year, and received a boat carved by BRH Emergency Room Dr. Lindy Jones.

ment were elated to see the craftsmanship be put to good use — and for it to go to a happy couple. Jones even personalized the back of it with Saige's name.

When Muñoz heard they were getting a boat as a gift, she pictured something much smaller. Ku-

nau, an avid fisherman, was also taken aback when hospital employees brought in the gift.

"When I saw that boat, I was like, 'It was meant to be,'" Kunau said. "It looks just like my boat back home."

Kunau and Muñoz left to go back to Yaku-

tat on Saturday. They said they've wanted to get married for a long time, but haven't been able to get both of their families together for a ceremony.

As they were packing everything up Friday afternoon, the two of them joked back and forth about Saige's boat, as the

9-pound, 10-ounce future fishing guide lay quietly alongside her stuffed animals.

"She's got her own little driftboat," Muñoz said. "Her little driftboat is nicer than your Pavati."

"I know," Kunau said. "I might have to swap boats with her."

STATE & REGION NEWS IN BRIEF

— Wire Reports —

Fairbanks guide pleads guilty to herding grizzly bears toward clients

By DAN JOLING

ANCHORAGE — An Alaska hunting guide who instructed employees on snowmobiles to herd grizzly bears toward clients has lost his master guide's license for life.

Brian Simpson of Fairbanks, operating as Wittrock Outfitters, also was fined \$35,000 and sentenced to a year of probation Thursday in Nome District Court. He also was ordered to pay \$2,600 in restitution for the killing of two grizzly bears.

In a plea deal, Simpson pleaded guilty to two counts of "aiding in the commission of a violation" for using his employees to turn bears toward his hunting clients. He also pleaded guilty to three counts of guiding within the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, where hunting is allowed but guiding without a federal permit is not.

The illegal actions took place on the Seward Peninsula north of Nome.

Simpson, 57, conducted spring bear hunts from Shishmaref, a Chukchi Sea village of 560 just north of the Bering Strait.

Alaska state wildlife troopers in April 2016 received a tip from Wildlife Safeguard, a nonprofit volunteer citizen organization, that Simpson had taken nonresident hunters to Serpentine Hot Springs within the national preserve.

Investigators determined that a hunter killed a bear April 26 with help from Simpson's employee, Matthew Iyatunguk.

According to the criminal complaint filed by assistant Attorney General Aaron Peterson, the hunters spotted a grizzly and Simpson instructed him to "turn it around," Iyatunguk told troopers.

"Iyatunguk explained that he chased the bear from about 30 yards behind until it was tired from running through the deep snow. Iyatunguk stated that he normally 'drives the bear' towards the hunters by revving the engine and making the machine 'scream,'" the complaint said.

As Iyatunguk chased the bear back, Simpson's client shot it from 150 yards.

A second client and a second employee told a similar story of a hunt two days later. Assistant guide Tyler Weyiouanna told troopers he routinely used his snowmobile to get ahead of grizzlies to scare them toward hunters.

"Weyiouanna explained that Simpson had spotted this bear and he (Weyiouanna) chased it on his snow machine and cut it off to prevent it from running from the hunter," the criminal complaint said.

Weyiouanna turned the bear back toward the hunting client, who shot it. Iyatunguk and Weyiouanna last spring pleaded guilty to using a motorized vehicle to harass game. Both were fined \$500.

Online applications for Permanent Fund Dividend checks resumed

The state has resumed accepting applications online for checks from Alaska's oil-wealth fund.

State revenue officials last Tuesday closed the online application system for what it described as technical issues that prevented applicants from submitting their forms.

The Department of Revenue at the time said there were reports that some applicants had inadvertently seen personal information from other applicants who had already filed for their Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend.

The department said the site would not reopen until officials were confident that submitted personal information is safe and secure.

A counter on the dividend division website showed thousands of people had applied as of Tuesday morning.

Officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Federal shutdown could delay planned Paine Field passenger flights

EVERETT, Wash. — Final federal approval of commercial passenger service at Paine Field, which was expected to begin Feb. 11, could be delayed by the ongoing government shutdown.

Gregory Martin, a Federal Aviation Administration spokesman in Washington, D.C., told The Daily Herald that "the partial shutdown could potentially delay" the agency's approval or disapproval, which will be based on a revised environmental assessment.

The outcome is widely expected to be approval, and airlines have been booking flights to and from Paine Field for weeks. Alaska Airlines and United Airlines are offering a combined 24 daily departures from Everett, with Alaska planning to launch service beginning Feb. 11 and United starting March 31.

But on Tuesday, Alaska conceded there could be a snag if the shutdown drags on.

"The FAA is continuing its work on the Paine Field environmental assessment and other required approvals, and so far we don't believe the partial government shutdown has impacted the process," Alaska spokesman Ray Lane said in an email.

Brett Smith, president and CEO of Everett-based Propeller Airports, which built and will manage the new Everett terminal, said he expects it will open on time.

LOCAL NEWS IN BRIEF

— Staff Reports —

Floor of garage parking spots going to legislative staff until end of session

With the Alaska Legislature about to ring in the new session, downtown Juneau is going to change.

One major change is parking. Starting Tuesday, Jan. 15, the third level of

the Downtown Transportation Center parking garage will be restricted to legislative parking permit holders only. The restriction will remain in effect until the end of the session.

Informational signage will be installed on Monday, Jan. 14, but enforcement won't start until Jan. 15, according to a public service announcement from the City and Borough of Juneau.



Bartlett
Regional Hospital



My B.E.H.R. CARE
Bartlett Electronic Health Record

Did you know?

You can view your Bartlett Regional Hospital health information online any time and from almost anywhere on your PC or mobile phone through the Patient Portal.

- See Your Visit History
- View Appointments
- Review Your Results
- Access Discharge Summaries
- Update Personal Information
- Pay Bills Online

Get started today!
Sign up here: www.bartlettthospital.org

***Please note: To sign up online, Bartlett Regional Hospital must have your email address ALREADY ON FILE. Questions? Please call, 907-796-8880**